

VZCZCXRO8804
PP RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHOU #0633/01 2221422
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 101422Z AUG 09
FM AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5284
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 OUAGADOUGOU 000633

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MCAAP](#) [MASS](#)
SUBJECT: BURKINA FASO: NCO SCHOOL GRADUATES FIRST CLASS
WITH WOMEN.

1.(U) SUMMARY: On August 3, 2009 the Burkinabe military graduated its second ever NCO class and the first one to include women. Forty three recruits were promoted to Sergeants after undergoing two years of rigorous training that included classroom instruction, and technical and physical aptitude training. The three women in the class distinguished themselves by being dedicated and enthusiastic and helped contribute to an overall amelioration of the class discipline. While recruitment happens only once every two years, by 2010 the Army hopes to be able to recruit one class every year. END SUMMARY.

How it came to be

12. (SBU) "In view of your remarkable results, I declare you able to serve in the Burkina Armed Forces and authorize you to be admitted to the rank of Sergeant", with these words the Burkinabe Chief of Defense (CHOD) MG Dominique Djendjere graduated the second NCO academy (ENSOA) class. The forty-three recruits admitted to ENSOA were originally selected from among a pool of 1,800 civilian candidates. After rigorous physical testing and background checks they began their initial training on July 9, 2007. The average age of the graduating sergeant is 23 years old. Approximately half have college degrees while the other half has at least a ninth grade education. The final grades were exceptionally strong, with no drop-outs during the two years of training.

13. (U) The NCO academy, created in 2005, is based out of Camp Baangre/Kamboincin, just outside of Ouagadougou. The first NCO class began its training in 2005 with 27 recruits and graduated its first class of Sergeants two years later in August 2007. The school's training program is run by Major Gilles Etienne, a French instructor seconded to the school. Prior to the creation of the school, Sergeants were promoted from within the enlisted ranks after successfully passing an exam. With the creation of ENSOA, NCO candidates are recruited directly from the civilian population and no longer have to rise through the ranks before being eligible for Sergeant training.

The pedagogical / training axis and priorities

14. (U) During the 24 months of NCO schooling, the instruction focuses on five broad areas, aimed at enhancing basic military knowledge and slowly grooming each student to become a team leader.

- Training and improvement of military competency (including inculcation into military rules and regulations, civil-military relations)
- Operational and tactical missions training (including PKO-type training, and how to run an exercise)

- Physical and sports training (increasing physical aptitude and creating cohesion through sports)
- Administrative procedure training
- General cultural awareness (including English language training and computer training)

¶5. (U) In addition to the overall pedagogical aims of NCO instruction, the student's training is broken down into specific training modules geared at making the recruits strong soldiers first and knowledgeable leaders second. The four technical phases of that training are:

- 12 weeks of basic training
- 30 weeks of team leader training and testing for admission to the second year of the program
- 21 weeks of group leader training
- 25 weeks of skills enhancement and testing for graduation exam

¶6. (U) In addition to the five pedagogical axes and the four technical training phases, the recruits also take part in a number of complementary instruction programs that strive to make them more well- rounded soldiers and leaders. These include:

- Four weeks of commando training
- Military driver's license exam
- Three weeks of infantry training (taught by the French)
- Marksmanship instructor training
- Heavy weapons instruction
- In-depth computer skills training

OUAGADOUGO 00000633 002 OF 002

 Women in the ranks and looking towards the future

¶7. (SBU) This graduating class was a pioneer in that for the first time ever, women were admitted as NCO recruits. Three women underwent the same training as their male counterparts.

During his remarks at the graduation ceremony, the Chief of Defense explained that the three women recruits had really shone as exemplary students. The women had pushed the men to achieve more, to do better, and to raise the overall level of the class performance. According to the CHOD the acceptance of women is not a "fashion", but rather the future of the Burkinabe Armed Forces, "the women in the graduating class have proven their worth and quality".

¶8. (U) While for the moment recruitment for the NCO academy occurs only once every 24 months, the plans are to improve and expand the current infrastructure to allow for a yearly recruitment. Barracks need to be constructed, especially to prepare for more women candidates, more staff needs to be recruited or allocated to the school, and supplementary funds have to be secured for additional and expanded training and more performing equipment.

¶9. (SBU) COMMENT: Because the NCO school is still in its infancy there is little data to test how effective and applicable the training given is. The fact that Burkina has invested in an NCO school shows it is concerned with and ready to invest in the professionalization of its military.
 END COMMENT.
 LAEUCHLI